



Planning a neighborhood is an act of community participation and an expression of belief in its future.

- *Planning to Stay*

Who are stakeholders?

- Residents (property owners and renters)
- School officials
- Religious institutions
- Community groups
- Business representatives

Why is involving all the community stakeholders important?

- People will have a greater sense of ownership about the plan.
- There will be increased determination when it comes time to implement the plan.
- It will accurately reflect the needs and concerns of the neighborhood.
- Most importantly it is harder for others, including public officials, to ignore the plan with so many behind it and involved from the start.



Land Use- The manner in which land is used. For example, low-density residential land uses primarily include single-family houses.

Transportation Networks- car, bicycle, transit and pedestrian options and amenities.

Community Facilities-

Services or conveniences provided for or available to a community. Examples include parks, libraries, fire/police stations.

Introduction

We have all had experience with planning. Business owners create business plans, neighborhood associations develop goals and every individual has probably set a New Year's resolution or two. These examples are all ways that people can plan. With a large-scale effort, planning can happen for your neighborhood. A city needs a plan to accommodate the needs and wishes of the people it hopes to serve with housing, schools, parks, roads, stores, offices, social services, garbage collection, water, etc. Through planning, we can identify the highest priorities for directing our resources.

A neighborhood plan is a blueprint that guides future growth and development in your area. During the planning process, community stakeholders:

- discuss issues - what works/what could be better,
- develop priorities – what should be done first, second, etc.
- develop goals - what is the desired outcome,
- and create strategies – what are the necessary steps to achieve the desired outcome

Plans generally include at least three elements: land use, transportation networks, and community facilities (*see sidebar*). Other specific issues identified by community members also can be addressed by the plan.

One of the goals that a planning effort seeks to achieve is the development of a prized community. To achieve this goal, several objectives need to be set, including:

- Promoting equal access to homes and jobs.
- Providing for persons most in need.
- Assuring good design and management to promote the health and well being of a city's residents.
- Assuring that services can be provided in a safe, efficient and attractive manner.
- Assuring needs of the present and future generations are met.

**Goals and Strategies Report**

Goals and Strategies Reports help focus a community's energies on specific goals and steps they are able to implement. The Report can be thought of as a "mini-plan," a document that describes what a community needs to accomplish in the short-term to enhance their neighborhood for the long term.

During the first Goals and Strategies workshop neighbors brainstorm neighborhood goals and develop strategies that identify what the community can do to help themselves. The end product is a report that includes a map of community strengths and weaknesses and a listing of neighborhood goals and strategies.

A second workshop is held for the community to review the draft report. A Goals and Strategies Report is a good first step for newly-organizing or re-organizing neighborhood groups. The reports are less time intensive to create than a neighborhood or community plan. Goals and Strategies Reports are discussed in greater detail in section 2.

Neighborhood Plans

Neighborhood Plans focus on geographic areas of about **one square mile, 4,000 to 10,000 residents or at least 1,500 dwellings**. Neighborhood plans generally include the population necessary to support an elementary school.

Community Plans

Community Plans focus on larger geographic areas that include between **20,000 and 60,000** persons and several neighborhood units. They include the population necessary to support at least one middle or high school.

All three documents provide a summary of the community's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOTs).



Advantages to Developing a Neighborhood Plan

The many rewards and benefits of working on a plan with Planning Department assistance are outlined below. Plans created with involvement from the Planning Department are presented to City Council for formal approval and adoption and become an important component of the City's Comprehensive Master Plan (*see sidebar*). Once approved by City Council, a plan is used by City departments, boards, and commissions as a guide when making decisions that may affect an area; even if decision makers change, an adopted plan will still be referenced. Key projects may be selected from plans to be included in the Annual Improvement Project Report (*see sidebar next page*) that is recommended to City Council as part of the budget process.

City of San Antonio Master Plan

The Master Plan Policies are intended to provide guidance in the evaluation of future decisions on land use, infrastructure improvements, transportation, and other issues, and ordinances that are proposed and considered after the adoption of the Master Plan Policies.

The primary objectives of master plans are to coordinate public and private investment; minimize conflict between land uses; influence and manage the development of the community; increase both benefits and cost effectiveness of public investment; predict infrastructure and service needs in advance of demand; and ensure that community facilities are located to best serve the community.

The Master Plan addresses neighborhoods through the following specific goals:

- Preserve, protect and enhance the integrity, economic viability, and livability of San Antonio's neighborhoods.
- Strengthen the use of the Neighborhood Planning Process and neighborhood plans.
- Provide safe, attractive, well-maintained neighborhoods for all adults and children.
- Promote the provision of sound and affordable housing to all San Antonians.

Coupled with each goal are policies that contribute to the achievement of each goal.

Annual Improvement Project Report

The Annual Improvement Project Report (AIPR) consolidates and recommends key projects from completed Community and Neighborhood Plans for funding. The AIPR is presented to the City Council for consideration prior to the presentation of the annual Five Year Forecast and the City Council Goals and Objectives Work Session. The report outlines key neighborhoods projects that can be considered when setting budget priorities.

Projects that may be considered include:

- * Road maintenance/resurfacing, drainage-way clean-up, sidewalks, traffic control equipment, and road layout improvements.
- * Larger capital projects that will need to be considered for possible bond financing

Advantages of developing a neighborhood plan include:

- Getting involved in development.
- Achieving community consensus.
- It serves as a tool to shape ideas with new residents, decision makers, developers and investors.
- It serves as a guide for future development (land use, zoning, etc.).
- It identifies tasks that need to be carried out to improve area.
- It provides continuity through leadership changes.

Benefits of Planning staff support:

- Meeting Facilitation
- Facilitation Training
- Research Assistance
- Technical Assistance (mapping, graphics, etc.).



Planning Department Assistance

The Planning Department works with neighborhood groups to develop Goals and Strategies Reports or Community or Neighborhood Plans. These three planning documents efforts provide the neighborhood with a blueprint to guide future growth and development in the area. The Planning Department can help your group decide which planning effort may be the best for your neighborhood or situation.

Community groups are encouraged to work directly with the Planning Department to create goals and strategies reports and neighborhood or community plans. Your neighborhood must apply through a competitive process to receive planning assistance. The Goals and Strategies Report application is evaluated based on the organization of the group, proposed boundaries, critical neighborhood issues and neighborhood projects. The Community or Neighborhood Plan application is evaluated based on a demonstration of your neighborhood's organized support and the commitment of the stakeholder groups to participate in the planning process.

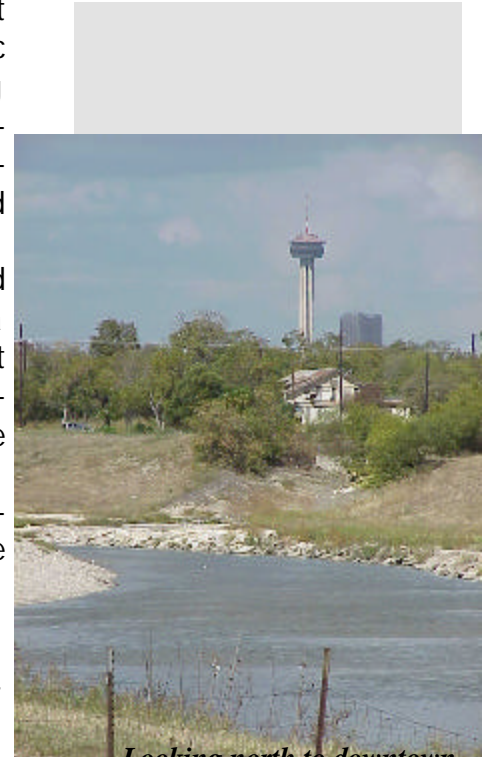
All applications are reviewed by an independent team that typically includes representatives of the Planning, Public Works, City Manager's Office, Asset Management, Building Inspections, Code Compliance, Community Initiatives, Cultural Affairs, Economic Development, Housing and Community Development, Neighborhood Action, and Parks and Recreation. Each applicant group is interviewed. Based on the information provided in the application and learned through the interview, the independent team develops a preliminary ranking. This ranking indicates which applicant groups are selected for staff assistance. The number selected depends on the number of staff available. The team's ranking is forwarded to the Planning Director for approval. Once an application is selected, the Planning Department directs a staff member to work with the neighborhood to develop the plan.

The City opens the application process about once a year. The basic application requires the following items:

- Names of willing Stakeholders (homeowners, schools, businesses, churches)
- Proposed Boundaries (*see Section 4 for more information on determining boundaries*)
- Neighborhood Description
- Degree of Organization (*does your organization have officers? bylaws?*)
- Past Neighborhood Projects

Neighborhood Planning without Departmental Assistance

Neighborhoods wishing to complete a plan have the option of receiving assistance from the Planning Department throughout the planning process. Small planning areas (*see Section 4: Setting Boundaries*) or groups that have the interest, expertise, and experience to complete a plan with minimal outside assistance, can complete the process on their own. However, if a neighborhood chooses this option, it will be responsible for the work of plan development, including the collection and organization of plan information, development of plan recommendations, and plan implementation. In these cases, the Planning Department can provide limited staff support usually consisting of necessary technical information such as base maps, current zoning, demo-



*Looking north to downtown
San Antonio*

"If you don't know where
you are going,
you could wind up someplace
else."
-Yogi Berra

graphics, etc. In addition, the Planning Department does not provide meeting facilitation, but facilitator training for neighborhood meetings is made available.

Plans developed without the assistance of the Planning Department are distributed to the Mayor, City Council members, and appropriate City Departments. These plans are not formally adopted by City Council or the Planning Commission as a component of the City's Master Plan.



Assessing Neighborhood Readiness to Plan

Unless the persons located within a planning area boundary are committed to providing many hours of volunteer time and believe in the importance of the planning effort, it will not be a success.

Is your group ready to begin a planning effort? Answer the following questions to get an idea.

YES	NO	Formal or informal networks of communication already exist within the neighborhood.
YES	NO	Neighbors know each other.
YES	NO	Neighbors have worked together in the past on some formal activity or social event.
YES	NO	Neighbors are currently involved with other important stakeholders, especially area schools, businesses, churches

If you found yourself answering "no" more often than "yes", it is likely that stronger organizational efforts must occur before your neighborhood is ready to undertake a plan. One of the best ways to mobilize your area is to form a neighborhood organization and register the group with the Planning Department (see Appendix 1). You may also work with the Planning Department for help in organizing an association.

Additional information, including the Neighborhood Association Registration application form is available from the

Planning Department or the Department's website (www.sanantonio.gov/planning). A copy of the application for registration is attached in Appendix 1.



History of Neighborhood Planning in San Antonio

Neighborhood planning made its San Antonio debut in 1979 when the City's Planning Department began designing the Neighborhood Planning Process. Planning staff had noticed that a number of active and capable neighborhood associations was increasing, and felt that these organizations should be invited to participate neighborhood improvement and revitalization planning process. Not only did these organizations have talent and provide volunteer time, they also had the drive to protect what was most important to them – their neighborhoods.

In 1980, the Planning Department developed its first model of participatory neighborhood planning. In this process, neighborhood associations could establish a Neighborhood Planning Team and write their own neighborhood plan, in consultation with the City's planning staff, who would coordinate the process. As a model, the staff selected the Mah-ncke Park Neighborhood Association, a vocal and energetic neighborhood association, to develop its first neighborhood plan.

After its 1983 adoption into the Master Plan, the Neighborhood Planning Process was revised and in 1989, and in 1998, replaced with the Community Building and Neighborhood Planning (CBNP) Program. The CBNP Program was created in response to the City's Master Plan (adopted on May 29, 1997), which called for preserving, protecting, and enhancing the integrity, economic viability, and livability of San Antonio's neighborhoods; strengthening the neighborhood planning process; and improving individual neighborhood plans.

Since its inception, the CBNP Program has assisted many citizens to assess their neighborhood and its needs, set goals and work toward implementing those goals. Perhaps, more importantly, many of San Antonio's neighbors have been empowered to become involved in planning activities,



Alta Vista Neighborhood Street

Neighborhood Workbook Sections

- **Section 2:** Goals and Strategies Reports
- **Section 3:** Neighborhood and Community Plans
- **Section 4:** Holding a Good Meeting
- **Section 5:** Establishing Plan Boundaries
- **Section 6:** Learning About Your Neighborhood
- **Section 7:** Action Steps for Neighborhood Plans
- **Section 8:** Frequently Asked Questions

Depending on your neighborhood's interest, all or several of these sections may be helpful to you.

However, one of the purposes of this workbook is to provide step-by-step information to those neighborhoods that have the need, desire, or capacity to play a primary role in planning for their own growth and improvement.

Therefore, if your organization is actively working with the Planning Department, much of the information contained in this Workbook may appear directed at a basic level of understanding.

which in turn, increases their knowledge about and commitment to their neighborhood, and ultimately the entire City of San Antonio.

In 1998, the city convened a group of public and private sector individuals and residential communities. This group, known as the Community Revitalization Action Group (CRAG) was an important part of an initiative to identify barriers to revitalization in San Antonio and revitalization models that could be expanded or repeated in other areas of San Antonio. The goals of revitalization are often the same goals of neighborhood planning; the recommendations outlined in the CRAG are very pertinent and supported by the CBNP process.

